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12 November 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Revised Main and Local Force Strength Estimate, July through October 1968

1. Continuing research to refine our strength estimate of VC/NVA Main and Local Forces has led us to revise our figures for July through October. The original CIA estimate of Main and Local Force strength for July was 171,000-187,000. The July estimate was derived as follows (in thousands):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| MACV OB Base Number | 134.4 |
| New/Unidentified Units | 12.5 |
| Small Specialised Local Force Units | 2.0- 7.0 |
| CS Units Integral to Divisions | 5.0- 10.0 |
| Avg Bn Strength Adjustment | 22.0- 28.0 |
| Sub-Total | <u>175.9-191.9</u> |
| Minus the 304 NVA Div | 5.0 |
| Total | <u>170.9-186.9</u> |

For subsequent months, because of the lag in the receipt of documentary evidence, estimates were made on the bases of the probable net effect on the OB of enemy gains and losses. For August, this estimate was an increase of 4,000-13,000 for a total of 175,000-200,000; for September, it was an add-on of 0-10,000 over August, giving us 175,000-210,000; for October, gain/loss evidence suggests that there was no significant change in force levels. For this reason and because of the substantial redeployment of forces, it is suggested that the estimate be held at the September level with its 35,000 range.

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2. In an attempt to derive a more accurate average battalion strength add-on figure, we systematically compared the average battalion strengths reported in captured documents and prisoner reports to strengths listed in MACV's OB for the period January 1967 through August 1968. The results of the comparison were that average battalion strengths carried in the OB reflected the average listed in the documents and PW reports for the first three quarters of 1967. But in the fourth quarter 1967 and for the first eight months of 1968, the average battalion strength carried in the OB fell considerably below that reported in documents and PW statements. For the first half of 1968, we found the average battalion strengths from documents and prisoners exceeded that listed in the OB by about 65 men per battalion. This figure is now the basis for adjusting our average battalion strength add-on rather than our previous estimate which resulted from an attempt to consider the effects of losses and gains as well as compensate for the low average strengths carried in the OB.

3. In the process of our research on average battalion strengths, we found that in addition to our add-on for CS units integral to divisions, there is also a need for an add-on for CS units integral to regiments. Documents and prisoners indicate that, as with divisions, regiments have integral support units, the number of which varies from a few platoons to 10 to 15 companies and platoons. The OB generally carries the strength of regimental headquarters and support (H & S) elements lower than primary source documentation indicates should be the case. Unlike the bookkeeping for divisions, the OB does not distinguish between headquarters staff and support elements at the regimental level, but carries only one figure for H and S. Our survey of documents and prisoner reports indicated an average of about 765 for regimental H and S compared to a comparable listing in the OB of 490, leaving a difference of 275. This difference multiplied by the 60 VC/NVA regiments listed in the OB* yields 16,500. Because the evidence is heavily weighted with NVA regiments which probably have larger H and S elements than VC regiments, 16,500 possibly is somewhat high. Thus, a range of 10,000-15,000 is suggested as an add-on for CS units integral to regiments.

4. Because our add-on of 2,000-7,000 for CS units integral to divisions may suggest a greater precision than intended, we propose to lower the range to zero to 5,000. This new range plus the regimental adjustment cited in the previous paragraph gives us a total add-on for CS units integral to divisions and regiments of 10,000-20,000.

*This number was derived by taking the 63 regiments listed in the August collateral and all source OBs and subtracting the 3 regiments of the 304th NVA Division which appears to have relocated permanently to North Vietnam.

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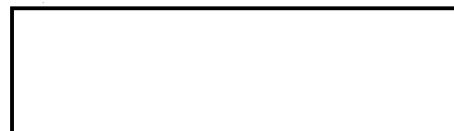
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5. Based on these new methodological adjustments, we now estimate the strength of VC/NVA Main and Local Forces for July as follows (in thousands):

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| MACV OB Base Number | 134.4 |
| New/Unidentified Units | 12.5 |
| Small Specialized Units | 5.0- 10.0 |
| CS Units Integral to Divisions | 0 - 5.0 |
| CS Units Integral to Regiments | 10.0- 15.0 |
| Avg Bn Strength Adjustment | 14.0 |
| Sub-Total | <u>175.9-190.9</u> |
| Minus 304th NVA Div | 5.0 |
| Total | <u>170.9-185.9</u> |
| Rounded to | <u>170 -185</u> |

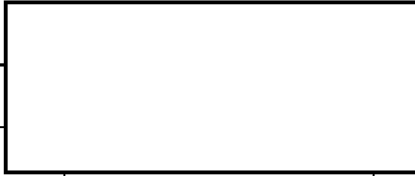
Because of our revised add-ons discussed above, these new strength figures are not necessarily compatible with our previous strength estimates of VC/NVA Main and Local Forces for the period December 1967 through June 1968. On the basis of our findings concerning average strengths of battalions and regimental H and S, we believe the base period estimate (1 January 1968) should be increased.

6. The net effect of our gain/loss approach for August through October has been to add some manpower to the enemy's forces and increase the range of uncertainty. It is not possible at this time to gauge accurately the extent of the increase in force levels. While we have more confidence in our base period estimate for July than previously, we also note that the size of enemy forces apparently did not increase during the first 6 months of the year as much as one would have thought, given the estimates for infiltration, recruitment, and losses. For this reason, we have been cautious in our estimate of the increase in enemy strength for August, September, and October and would hold to those original preliminary estimates.



Chief
South Vietnam Branch

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| TRANSMITTAL SLIP | | DATE <i>12 Nov 68</i> |
| TO: <i>Ch D/I</i> | | |
| ROOM NO. | BUILDING | |
| REMARKS: <i>pw^s request.</i> | | |
| FROM: |  | |
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FORM NO. 241
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REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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